

PROGRESSIVE FARMER

THE INDUSTRIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE PARAMOUNT TO ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF STATE POLICY.

Vol. 17.

Raleigh, N. C., February 25, 1902.

No. 3

Agriculture.

HARRY FARMER'S TALKS.

LXII.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

We were travelling on the train a few days ago and noticed what was being done on the farms along the railroad.

We noticed on a large farm a piece of land which had no crop on it last year. The owner is a good business man and looks after his money very carefully, but this spring he will buy fertilizer at a high price, and haul ditch bank and woods mould to try to make a crop on that land. If he had planted cow peas he could have added nitrogen and humus in that soil besides getting hog feed enough to pay all the expense of the crop of peas.

This same farmer complains that he cannot raise as many pounds of cotton to the acre as he did a few years ago with the same amount of fertilizer. His land is what we would call the ideal soil to hold manure, it being nearly level with a clay subsoil. This same land has produced as high as 1,600 pounds of seed cotton to the acre with the application of 200 pounds of Peruvian guano per acre. The fertilizer used just stimulated the crop and caused it to use up all the humus in the soil. Heavy applications of nitrogen have the same effect on land when applied in a concentrated form like nitrate of soda, sulphate of ammonia, fish scrap, slaughter house refuse, tankage, dried blood, cotton seed meal and Peruvian guano that whiskey has on a man: it stimulates for a short time only to leave the victim weaker than before using.

Where fowl house or stable manure is used year after year none of these bad effects are seen. Now in order to keep up the fertility of the soil you must get something in the soil as nearly like stable manure as you can and there is nothing that will do this with as little cost as cow peas. This is not the only man that complains of this condition, for you will find them scattered all over the country.

On another farm we saw two large horses, each one hitched to a single plow, with two men plowing. They were not plowing more than five or six inches deep. The cotton and corn stalks had to be knocked down, which took the labor of several others. Now this man is often short of help and tries to look after his business with the eye of an eagle and stops every leak, yet he does not know that a outaway harrow would do all this work and do it better, thus saving more than one-half the cost.

Trim or prune the grape vines before the sap starts up.

Do not be in a hurry to plow the cotton and corn land unless it is dry. Too early plowing may make insects more troublesome. Crops in this section grow better on late plowed land.

HARRY FARMER.

Columbus Co., N. C.

Farmers agree that the fall oats have about all been killed in the ground by the severity of this winter's weather. The fall sown oats are the principal dependence, so far as this crop is concerned, the spring oats rarely ever amounting to much. Coming on the heels of the failure of the corn crop last year, this loss of the oats crop will prove serious. And what is looking none too well.—Charlotte Observer.

Our farmers are hard at work getting ready to make a crop. There will be 5 per cent. more tobacco planted this year than last, and we hope to make a better crop; if we don't, I think we had better stop trying to make tobacco at all. The cotton crop will be cut short 75 per cent but there will be more home supplies planted than usual, such as corn, peanuts and potatoes.—D. McCain, Carteret Co., N. C.

WARREN COUNTY FARM NOTES.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

Since the present cold snap, the farming people have not done much farm work except get wood and make fires. Very few have been able to burn plant land.

If all reports are true, there will be a short crop of cotton planted this year in this community. Everybody, it seems, is turning his attention to tobacco; hence we may look for low prices for the weed next fall.

The curtailing of the cotton acreage is caused partly by the uncertainty of labor, which is getting scarce every year. The young men, both white and colored, as soon as they grow up are looking elsewhere for support and work, and in most cases they are finding it. There are at this day and time very little inducements to hold the young men, or even boys, on the farm. In some instances whole families are leaving and flocking to the cities to work their girls and boys in factories. Now this ought not to be, and a remedy ought to be had.

And as soon as the farm work opens or starts, the children, or a large number of them, will be taken away from school to work on the farm and can be seen in the corn fields, or cotton and tobacco patches.

Warren Co., N. C.

FARM NOTES FROM PASQUOTANK.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The present winter has been the coldest on record in this part of the State.

This county generally plants a large acreage in truck, but owing to high price of peas, very few have been planted. We have a canning factory at Elizabeth City and many farmers plant peas for the factory, which pays 50 cents per bushel. There will be an increase in the Irish potato acreage.

Some of our farmers have bought a lesson at a very high price. They depended on cotton for their money crop; the price and crop both were short, and we find them buying corn at 70 cents and meat at 10 cents.

Cabbage plants have been killed worse than usual. The ground has been frozen so as to retard plowing ever since February came in, but if warm weather will come soon, and stay by us, the farmers will soon come to the front. J. T. B.

Pasquotank Co., N. C.

AN INQUIRY ANSWERED BY HARRY FARMER.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

1. How does Harry Farmer use sulphate of potash, etc? Does he sow it in drill after being mixed? Have rows 3 feet apart and plant my sweet potatoes 14 to 18 inches in the row.

2. Is there any difference in the chemicals, etc., for Irish potatoes?

J. B.

Brunswick Co., N. C.

(Answered by Harry Farmer.)

1. Lay off rows with a plow or drag; just mark the land so you can drill the manure, then sow the potash and phosphate on the manure separately. Do not mix the potash and phosphate, as they would undergo a chemical change which would injure them for fertilizers.

2. See Talk No. 61 for Irish potatoes. The same potash would do but you need more phosphate and ammonia for this crop. Sweet potatoes growing during the hottest part of the summer when nitrogen is most active do not require, as much quick-acting nitrogenous manure as the Irish potato crop, but needs more humus or vegetable matter in the soil. Hence the large application of manure recommended for sweet potatoes.

Representative Burlison, of Texas, stated to the House Committee on Agriculture last week that 240,000 bales of Texas cotton valued at \$10,000,000 were destroyed last year by the Mexican weevil. The committee inserted a \$20,000 item in the agricultural appropriation bill to be immediately available to eradicate the pest.

CANNING FACTORIES WOULD PAY FARMERS.

They Should be Established all Over the South—No Section Better Adapted to Them.—Built Up by Home Capital.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The South's great benefit is to be derived from manufacturing. Your supremacy as an agricultural region is recognized, but the line of the greatest operations will be in the establishment of factories and mills to convert your produce into finished articles for the market. I know nothing that would pay more than canning factories. They require

COMPARATIVELY SMALL CAPITAL, stimulate the farming class to grow a greater variety of products by affording them a cheap market at their own doors, give employment to numbers of persons, male and female, who would otherwise have none, and send out a valuable food product which will return money to circulate in domestic channels. Another advantage is that the industry can be built by home capital.

A canning factory is, in every respect, a home industry. The South raises nearly every variety of fruit and vegetables, and the industry would thrive there. Especially would it be an advantage to small towns.

THE BEST PAYING PRODUCTS to put in cans are peaches, tomatoes, peas, beans, corn, sweet potatoes, berries, oysters, fish and shrimp. The market demand for these goods increases each year, as the people learn the value of these food products.

The Southern States should not be forced to purchase canned goods from the North or West, when the natural resources of your own country offer such inducements to the establishment of the industry. Some two years ago I had occasion to sample a can of very fine Maine corn, packed in one of the leading cities of the North. I remarked to the dealer that I could duplicate it in the South. He ridiculed the idea, and said that "it couldn't be done outside of the New England States." I told him all right, I would prove my assertion true later on. Some three or four months afterward I presented the gentleman with a can of corn packed in the South by myself, and asked him to sample and express his opinion of the same. He did so and at once said, "Take that can, go into the market and tell the dealers to get down their best brands, and yours will cut out with them. You have got the corn to do it with. If that is the kind of corn you are packing in the South, you won't have to hunt for buyers long; they will be hunting for you."

So small is the stock of canned goods on hand, that the holder can well afford, if necessary, to wait until spring to dispose of it.

THE DEMAND FOR CONSUMPTION increases disproportionately to the supply, and if canners would reflect, there is rarely any real cause for anxiety. This country is large, facilities for distribution are increasing, and the trade for canned goods is growing. In every household they constitute a portion of the daily food, and they are cheap, ready for use, and in every respect desirable. Without them there are portions of our country that would have to subsist on salt meat and bread. To the mine, the camp, and the mariner, they are now indispensable.

The worst feature of the business is the ignorance of the buyers as to the assortment of output. They swallow any and all reports and few are governed by sound judgment.

Takes the country at large this year, and we venture to assert that the pack does not exceed three-fifths of an average one, in the face of little or nothing being left over from last season. Most of our own products were sold before they were canned, or whilst being so. And the supply left here is a mere bagatelle.

The South can furnish fish, oysters, shrimp, fruits and vegetables of finer flavor than the East or West. Undoubtedly you can furnish these goods whose superiors do not grow

anywhere on Uncle Sam's dominions.

There have been

FAILURES OF CANNING HOUSES

in the South. These have not been brought on by natural circumstances. They have been brought on by a lack of economy and painstaking care and co-operation.

IT PAYS THE FARMER.

There are indispensable elements of success in any business. The farmer is slow to plant for these factories, even when the canner tells him he can realize more for the product in one season than the land it is grown on would sell for. Let the canner go ahead and demonstrate to the farmer by actual test that the growing of these products is not any harder than to cultivate an acre of six cent cotton, and that the same land that makes him in good seasons one-half bale of cotton to the acre, will grow him on an average of two hundred bushels of tomatoes at 25 cents per bushel; or 75 bushels of peas at 60 cents per bushel, or 100 bushels of beans at 50 cents per bushel, and so on, and not impoverish his land to the extent that cotton does.

One farmer related to me in Indiana some years ago when he received a check for eighty odd dollars for tomatoes grown on less than an acre of land, that "it was so easy it was just like picking it up in the road." Once get the farmers to know the good of the thing, and the balance is easy.

There is another feature of the business that deserves special mention, and that is the

EMPLOYMENT IT FURNISHES,

at good wages, to every class of people. Male and female find it pleasant and profitable work. An outfit for canning costing two hundred dollars would give employment to at least forty people directly, and as many more indirectly. It is peculiarly adapted to the smaller towns and cities.

Yes, canning will pay in the South. You have those things which with good management and perseverance will make canning factories pay in the South, as they are paying in a grand way in so many other States.

R. A. STEWART.

Baltimore, Md.

DO NOT BURN GRASS.

It is a very common practice among farmers to burn the grass, corn stalks and other vegetable matter on the farm. They do this simply to get rid of it. Some few perhaps really think the ashes worth more to the soil than rotting vegetation.

But many burn because they think the trash interferes with cultivating the crop. If the growth is very sound and plowing poorly done, there is some risk of this, but if the grass and such like is well buried and mixed thoroughly with the soil by harrowing, this will not be true.

We object to burning because of the great loss and damage to the soil. Our Southern soils need more humus. This can be obtained only from rotting vegetation. Fertilizers do not help to make it. They rather tend to decrease it.

Rotting grass or other trash will contribute directly to the supply of plant food in the soil. Nothing so readily helps a plant to grow as that which has already been a plant once.

In addition to the plant food supplied the process of rotting starts fermentation in the soil and helps to make soluble and available the elements of plant life in the soil which were insoluble and therefore worth nothing to the growing crop. This is done in several ways. The mechanical condition of the soil is improved. It is made loose and warm. Hence it can hold much more moisture; thus it helps aeration to prepare food for the growing crop and supplies water to dissolve and carry the food. Burning is a great waste. We would not need to buy so much guano if we put all the vegetable matter back into the soil that we could.

Do not burn anything that will rot. Anything that will burn will rot, so do not burn anything.—Southern Cultivator.

RELATION OF SPARROWS TO AGRICULTURE.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The sparrows form one of the most numerous and one of the most widely distributed groups of small birds in the United States. They seem to prefer to nest on or near cultivated ground, and wherever there are farms or gardens there we find the sparrow.

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S INVESTIGATION.

Sparrows are well known but, strange to say, until lately very little attention had been given to their relation to agriculture. It is evident that a genus of birds so numerous and so constantly associated with farms and gardens as the sparrows are, should be an important factor in rural economy and that a thorough investigation of their food habits would be of great value. Such an investigation was recently made by the United States Department of Agriculture and it fully proves their value to farmers and shows that they are well worthy of our protection.

The food of the smaller order of field birds consists of fruit, grain, and insects, and a bird's value to the farm depends on the amount of each kind of food eaten and whether that kind is in itself beneficial or injurious to agriculture.

THE ENGLISH VS. THE NATIVE SPARROW.

The English sparrow, which is treated apart from the native species, and which is a pest wherever found, adds more or less fruit destruction to its numerous other sins, but cultivated fruit forms no important part of the diet of the native sparrow, which is harmless to orchard and vineyard.

NATIVE SPARROWS DO NOT INJURE CROPS.

In the destruction of grain the English sparrow again comes to the front, and so much does it consume that on this account alone it might be declared a pest. Perhaps it is natural that the native sparrow should fall under the ban of suspicion. The native bird, however, has no taste for cultivated grain, and if he ever does take any it is but to sample it. To prove this conclusively, a number of sparrows were collected on a wheat farm both before and after the grain was out. Of nineteen stomachs of native sparrows killed only two showed that the birds had eaten any grain, and these two had taken but a grain apiece. On the other hand five stomachs of English sparrows killed at the same time were examined and each showed that the owner had recently gorged itself on grain.

DEATH TO WEED SEED.

There is one kind of grain, however, that the native sparrow does have a decided fondness for, and that kind is weed seeds. As a weed destroyer the sparrow stands pre eminent. Whenever fall approaches and the weed seeds ripen, the sparrows gather in great flocks and descend on the weeds; weed seeds form their principal food for the rest of the winter. So abundant is the supply of the seeds, and such is the birds' fondness for them that the amount consumed by each bird is almost incredible. Seldom, if it can get them, does a field sparrow content itself with less than a hundred seeds at a meal; while in the stomach of a snowflake that had been breaking in a garden in March were found 1,500 amaranth seeds. It has been estimated that in Iowa the tree sparrows alone destroy over 1,750,000 pounds of weed seeds during their winter sojourn. The English sparrow also consumes a fairly large amount of weed seeds and in parks and on lawns does considerable service in keeping down the lawn weeds; but this good is more than overbalanced by its filthy and destructive habits.

AS TO INSECT PESTS

It can hardly be expected that such weed destroyers as sparrows are should consume as many insect pests as birds that are wholly insectivorous. As a matter of fact, insect pests form only about 25 per cent. of the food of the adult native sparrow and they cannot be depended

upon to keep down an invasion of insects. Though a adult sparrows do not consume much animal food, their nestlings are entirely insectivorous; and as they raise each season from two to three broods down whose throats they cram countless numbers of caterpillars and grasshoppers, they do in this way their greatest service as insect destroyers to farmers.

CONCLUSION: THE NATIVE SPARROW IS HELPFUL AND DESERVES PROTECTION.

Following up the previously mentioned division of food into elements that would be of themselves beneficial or injurious to agriculture, we find first, that the native sparrow consumes very little fruit, grain or other food that is beneficial; on the other hand, the amount consumed that would be injurious in its effects is very large and consists mainly of weed seeds, which form more than four fifths of their food during the greater part of the year. We may safely conclude, therefore, that this little bird is entirely beneficial in its effects and deserves protection.

CHAS. W. MARTIN.
A. and M. College, West Raleigh, N. C.

As to home-mixing, the following paragraph from Farmers' Voice is interesting:

"The question is often asked, 'Is it more economical to mix one's own fertilizers or buy them ready mixed?' Like most questions, a direct and unqualified answer to this one might be misleading, but it is safe that under proper conditions home mixing of fertilizers will prove decidedly more economical than the use of the ready-mixed article. And the first condition is co-operation among farmers in the purchase of the ingredients. In cases where this was done in New Jersey, representing in the aggregate purchase of over 1,000 tons, showed that these mixtures cost on an average \$28.62 per ton, while the fertilizing ingredients which they contained at the New Jersey Experiment Station valuations, were worth \$31.68, and in the average factory-mixed fertilizer would have cost \$43.12—a saving of \$14,500 on the entire quantity."

TOMATOES MORE PROFITABLE THAN COTTON.

The Apex Canning Company has made arrangements to run on full time this season and will pay more for tomatoes than ever before. This concern is a home enterprise and should receive the support of all the farmers in this and adjoining sections. At twenty five cents per bushel for tomatoes the farmer can clear more on one acre in tomatoes than he can on the same land with the same amount of labor and manure in cotton at ten cents per pound, and the money comes in at a time when the farmer most needs it. It is now time that the seeds for early tomatoes should be sown.—Apex News.

TEACH AGRICULTURE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Certainly there is need of more intelligent and practical farmers to reclaim and rebuild the old homes that have decayed and to feed and improve the lands that have become impoverished and unproductive in the hands of renters who have no incentive to improve land. To improve farms men must own them, live upon them and be directly interested in their work. Class legislation, discrimination against the farmers for the past twenty years, has so thoroughly fixed the disastrous tenant system in many sections that it will take many years, even under favorable conditions, to eliminate it. The State can do more for agriculture, do more to create an interest in the farm—the home of virtue and vigorous manhood and intellect—by requiring a course of study of agriculture to be taught in the public schools. And while the boys are prosecuting this study, the girls might be taught with wonderful results something practical in every day domestic work, that it takes something more than fancy hats and dresses to make an accomplished lady.—Marshville, N. C., Home.